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Monday, 26 February 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Alotaibi	(Kuwait)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Zhang Dianbin
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Clay
	United States of America	Ms. Eckels-Currie

Agenda

The situation in Burundi

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2018/89)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Burundi

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2018/89)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Burundi to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and His Excellency Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/89, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi.

I now give the floor to Mr. Kafando.

Mr. Kafando (*spoke in French*): I welcome the opportunity to brief the Council on the occasion of the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on Burundi (S/2018/89). Before I begin, allow me, Mr President, to congratulate you on your accession to presidency of the Council for this month and to greet all members of the Council.

We had hoped to have among us President Benjamin Mkapa, facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, whose contribution would undoubtedly have not only deepened the understanding of the political stakes in Burundi, but also identified prospects for the continuation of the process. Unfortunately, he was not able to make the trip due to his participation in the summit of the Heads of State of the East African Community.

As announced, my briefing concerns the Secretary-General's report on the situation at Burundi, of 25 January 2018. The first observation of the report focuses on the political situation in Burundi, which remains tense and characterized by measures that restrict freedom. Indeed, I note that only the majority party and some other political formations allied to it are able to carry out political activities without hindrance. The economic situation is far from improving owing to the ongoing political situation. Such an environment cannot be conducive to the organization of credible elections.

The security situation is improving significantly across the country, although human rights violations and other abuses continue to be reported, especially since the launch on 12 December 2017 of the campaign to raise awareness of the constitutional referendum.

As far as the humanitarian situation is concerned, the report emphasizes that it remains a matter of concern. The irrevocable decision of the Burundian Government to go ahead with the constitutional amendment will be decided by the referendum that, in principle, is planned for May. To that end, it should be noted that the concern raised by the Secretary-General in his report cannot be interpreted as interference in Burundi's internal affairs by denying the country its sovereign right to amend its own Constitution. On the contrary, it must be understood as his desire to seek consensus around an issue of such importance to the future or even the fate of Burundi.

History make it clear that the stability and development of Burundi over the past 15 years are essentially the result of the broad consensus that prevailed in the negotiation and adoption of the Arusha Agreement. Moreover, this recommendation on the part of the Secretary-General merely explains article 299 of the 2005 Burundian Constitution, which is still in force and which states that "[n]o revision procedure may be used if it undermines national unity [or] the cohesion of the Burundian people".

The United Nations, the African Union, the East African Community and the European Union are the guarantors of the Arusha Agreement, the quintessence of which is not limited to ethnic and gender balance, which is retained in the new Constitution. Power-sharing, good political governance, pluralist democracy based on the principle of broad consensus, and the protection of minority rights remain at the heart of the Arusha Agreement which, as we know, was the basis of the Burundian Constitution of 2005, which is currently under revision.

All this could have been possible if political will had prevailed in the inter-Burundian dialogue, under the auspices of the East African region. That having been said, I take this opportunity to congratulate the mediator and facilitator of the Burundian dialogue on his efforts to find a just solution to the crisis. Now that, following its most recent summit, the region has decided to pursue the dialogue, it is up to the African Union, alongside the other partners, including the United Nations, to remain strongly committed to the outcome of mediation. For the United Nations, whose support for the process is intended above all to help bring the Burundians together in the hope of reaching a dynamic compromise, dialogue remains indispensable.

I have just summarized very briefly the report of the Secretary-General on Burundi, submitted for the Council's consideration. Everything indicates that the country remains a subject of concern to the international community. I note that in its communiqué on the report, dated 14 February, the Government of Burundi declares itself ready to spare no effort to cooperate with the United Nations in the context of respect of its sovereignty. In that regard, as Special Envoy I can attest to the fact that this good cooperation already exists between the Burundian authorities and the United Nations mission in Burundi. I thank them for their welcome and their full availability, although I would add that, contrary to certain statements, the Special Envoy's contribution to the Secretary-General's report has hardly exceeded his obligations, let alone guided by any partiality. The sole objective guiding his actions was to sound the alarm bell so that the emerging future of the Burundian people can be enjoyed by all Burundians and thereby to avoid the endless reversals of which that country has suffered so much.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Kafando for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lauber.

Mr. Lauber: On behalf of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), I would like to thank you, Sir, for inviting me to brief the Security Council today and for the excellent cooperation between the Council and the configuration. As per established practice, the following statement has been approved by the members of the configuration, including the country concerned, Burundi.

Since my previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.8109), the Burundi configuration of the PBC convened on two occasions, on 8 November 2017 and 29 January 2018, with a focus on humanitarian, socioeconomic and political questions. The configuration heard briefings from Mr. Garry Conille, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Burundi, and from representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Peacebuilding Support Office.

At the briefing on 29 January, Ms. Ursula Müller, Assistant Secretary-General of OCHA, reported that in the past three years, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in Burundi had tripled, increasing from 1 million people to 3.6 million people. She noted that 25 per cent of the population was estimated to be food insecure. That is an increase of 7 per cent as compared to 2016. In 2017, 500,000 people received food and nutrition assistance. Currently, at least 60,000 children suffer from severe acute malnutrition. On a more positive note, a malaria epidemic, which resulted in approximately 9,400 deaths between 2015 and 2017, has successfully been contained.

On 19 February, OCHA presented its report on the humanitarian response plan for 2018 in Bujumbura. On 21 February, the Government reported in a press release that it rejected the content of the report as a whole owing to a lack of cooperation, calling OCHA's numbers exaggerated and referring to positive developments regarding food security. The Government invited OCHA to discuss cooperation on humanitarian responses with the responsible ministries in order to produce a consensual plan for both parties.

At the configuration meeting of 29 January, Ms. Ninette Kelley, Director of the New York Office of UNHCR, informed the configuration of the challenges related to the return of refugees from Tanzania to Burundi. On the basis of an agreement reached by Burundi, Tanzania and UNHCR at the Tripartite Commission meeting last August, 13,000 refugees returned in 2017. The repatriation of another 60,000 persons is planned for 2018. The return of refugees will increase pressure on the receiving communities, requiring additional reintegration support to those who return, as well as to those who did not leave the area. UNHCR also reports an influx of more than 8,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo into Burundi since the beginning of 2018.

The displaced persons inside Burundi are being supported under the humanitarian response plan. Besides that, a regional refugee response plan is in place to support the 434,000 Burundian refugees living in Tanzania, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. On 29 January, the Permanent Representative of Tanzania informed the configuration that Tanzania had decided to withdraw from the comprehensive refugee response framework.

In various interactions with the configuration, Resident Coordinator Conille pointed to the challenging socioeconomic situation. A negative trade balance, inflation, which rose from 5.6 per cent in December 2016 to 18 per cent in December 2017, unemployment and a shortage of foreign currency reserves are among the most worrisome economic trends. The Resident Coordinator outlined multidimensional challenges for the United Nations. The United Nations country team is trying to address the chronic vulnerability and a series of shocks simultaneously. At the moment, strengthening the resilience of the population is a priority of the country team engagement in Burundi.

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the negotiations on a revised memorandum of understanding between OHCHR and the Government of Burundi have yet to be finalized, and the cooperation that was suspended on 11 October 2016 has not yet resumed. I encourage both parties to move forward and to finalize the memorandum of understanding. Meanwhile, the preparations for the deployment of three human rights experts to Bujumbura, in line with Human Rights Council resolution 36/2, of 28 September 2017, are being finalized.

As mentioned in earlier briefings to the Council, it is obvious that the activities of the configuration must be complementary to the efforts to advance the political reconciliation in Burundi undertaken at the subregional, regional and international levels. To that end, I have maintained regular contacts with Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, East African Community (EAC) Facilitator for Burundi; Mr. Smaïl Chergui, African Union (AU) Commissioner for Peace and Security; Mr. Basile Ikouebe, AU Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region; and, of course, Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, all of whom I had an opportunity to meet recently in Addis Ababa or Geneva.

In both recent meetings of the PBC Burundi configuration, Member States expressed overwhelming support for the EAC-led dialogue process and gratitude to President Mkapa for his personal engagement. While the Government recognizes that progress was made during the fourth session of the dialogue, some delegations regretted the lack of progress in the process. Some members of the configuration expressed concern that the upcoming referendum on a revised Constitution could reverse some of the gains achieved through the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. Other delegations expressed the view that constitutional amendments came under the sovereignty of the country and that the situation was generally improving.

In the field of security, since my most recent visit to Burundi and the region, I have received reports that the security situation in the country has been generally calm. I encourage all national stakeholders to contribute to peace and stability in Burundi.

I am currently preparing my next trip to Burundi, which is planned to take place from 27 to 30 March. In view of the recent developments and after consultations with the configuration, I intend to focus on the following five topics during my visit.

First is the mediation efforts of the EAC. In my contacts in Burundi, I will insist that the remaining political divergences be addressed in the framework of the EAC-led dialogue and in an inclusive manner.

Secondly, related to that, I plan to discuss the path leading towards the 2020 elections. I will encourage my interlocutors to reflect on how free, fair and democratic elections in a pluralistic and peaceful environment can be ensured in Burundi and how the international community can support Burundi on that path.

Thirdly, I also plan to continue the socioeconomic dialogue with the Government and its international partners. That dialogue should seek both to address the needs of the population and to overcome existing obstacles to cooperation. I plan to involve additional partners, such as regional actors, the private sector, civil society and academia, in that conversation.

Fourthly, I will continue to focus on the humanitarian situation and to engage with the humanitarian actors on the ground in cooperation with the Government.

Fifthly, national reconciliation and dealing with the past will remain high on my agenda. That is a subject to

which the President of the Republic of Burundi attaches great importance.

The priorities are very similar to those defined by the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) for its current engagement. Since my briefing in November, the Peacebuilding Fund has approved three new projects in Burundi, worth a total of $6.5 million. The sum of $3 million was approved for a project involving the four communities in Burundi with the highest number of expected returnees. The project seeks to increase the protection of displaced persons in border areas, specifically with regard to social and economic rights, including access to basic services and livelihoods for returnees and members of host communities, as well as gender-based violence. The second new PBF initiative, at about $1.75 million, supports capacity-building among the youth wings of political parties. The third project, in the same amount, supports intergenerational networks of women leaders in their ability to launch local peacebuilding initiatives.

Based on my recent contacts with Burundian stakeholders and regional and international actors, I wish to draw the following conclusions. The EAC-led dialogue process remains an indispensable instrument to address the current situation in Burundi. National, regional and international interlocutors should continue to lend their support to the efforts undertaken by President Museveni and President Mkapa.

Secondly, the upcoming 2020 elections require increased international attention. It would be a great achievement if national, regional and international actors could agree on some kind of road map so as to create the necessary conditions for democratic, peaceful and inclusive elections in 2020.

Thirdly, humanitarian needs must be addressed. I call on Burundi's international partners to strengthen the resilience of the population by addressing the current humanitarian challenges on the ground in cooperation with the Government. At the same time, I call on the Government of Burundi to continue to cooperate closely and constructively with its international humanitarian partners to address the most urgent needs of Burundi's population.

Fourthly, mid- and long-term socioeconomic development must not be ignored. I invite the Government of Burundi and its partners to engage in dialogue on mutually beneficial, people-centred and innovative forms of engagement.

Fifthly, I remain convinced that a swift signing of the memorandums of understanding between the Government and OHCHR, as well as between the Government and the African Union, and the deployment of the respective human rights observers will provide a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the human rights situation and help safeguard the space for civil society in Burundi.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Lauber for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, on behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, let me express my gratitude to the President of the Security Council for organizing this meeting on Burundi and for the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/89) on the situation in the country, presented by His Excellency Mr. Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, to whom Equatorial Guinea conveys its sincere thanks for the outstanding work that he is doing there. Likewise, Equatorial Guinea expresses its confidence in the mediator of the inter-Burundian dialogue, His Excellency Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of Uganda, and in its facilitator, His Excellency Mr. William Benjamin Mkapa, former President of the Republic of Tanzania, for the work being carried out to find common ground for an agreement among the members of the political class in Burundi. Accordingly, the joint communiqué issued by the latest Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community expressed appreciation for, and acknowledged the work being carried out by, both statesmen within the framework of seeing through the inter-Burundian dialogue. The briefing by Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, in his capacity as the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, also afforded us a clear picture of the situation in Burundi, for which we are extremely grateful.

As always, Equatorial Guinea understands that a situation such as the one in Burundi, which is an internal matter, must be resolved internally through a genuine and inclusive political negotiation process among Burundians. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea commends the positive initiatives adopted by the Government of Burundi and its President, His

Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza, so as to maintain national stability and promote internal reconciliation, and urges all parties in Burundi to participate actively in the political dialogue and resolve their differences peacefully through dialogue and negotiations. The mediation efforts of regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and the East African Community, and the constructive role that the United Nations can play must make up the bulwark of mechanisms for finding a lasting political solution to the situation.

Equatorial Guinea believes that political dialogue is the only way out of the situation in Burundi, and, for that reason, it very positively views the initiatives of the East African Community-led inter-Burundian dialogue held in Arusha, the outcome of which will undoubtedly help normalize the situation. The return to normalcy implies that the dialogue — as the Government has suggested — can already take place within Burundian territory — the home of all children of Burundi — since the security situation has significantly improved, as the report of the Secretary-General notes.

The gradual voluntary return of refugees to their homes is another sign of the normalization of the situation, and the challenge must now lie in their relocation and return to normalcy. We believe that the United Nations, together with local entities, should help in that process, which must comply with the principles enshrined in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951. We wish to acknowledge the generosity of neighbouring countries that have welcomed refugees.

As a sovereign country, Burundi enjoys the right to adopt any legislative initiative that it deems appropriate for itself. In that regard, we believe that the constitutional referendum scheduled to be held next May falls within powers of the country as a sovereign State. Many other countries have gone through similar processes. They have been considered internal affairs, and in Burundi the case should not be different. The sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Burundi must be fully respected. Any negotiation process must lead to the holding of fair elections in 2020. It is therefore essential that all parties commit to the East African Community-led process and unwaveringly show their good will for the benefit of the Burundian people. Only in that way will we witness the full and complete recovery of the people of Burundi so that they can enjoy their innumerable economic possibilities and get on board the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union to participate fully in the sustainable development of that beautiful African country and brotherly nation of Central Africa.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank Mr. Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and Ambassador Lauber, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their insightful briefings. We express our deep appreciation for the tireless work of the Special Envoy in leading a series of important meetings with Government officials, high-level representatives of international and regional organizations and other stakeholders to seek ways to advance the negotiation process in close cooperation with the facilitator.

Despite progress made in inter-Burundian dialogue, we remain concerned that direct and constructive talks between the Government and the opposition have yet to be established. In that regard, we urge all sides to engage in dialogue to end the crisis according to the spirit and letter of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. We also call on the leadership of the subregion and guarantors of the Arusha Agreement to redouble their efforts with regard to the revitalization of the East African Community-led mediation. We commend the East African Community mediator, President Museveni, and the facilitator, former President Mkapa, for their steadfast commitment to uniting the region and finding a peaceful solution to the crisis. Although constitutional amendments are the sovereign right of Burundi, we strongly believe that that national process should be held in an environment of confidence and broad consensus and include all key political stakeholders to ensure lasting peace.

The worsening social and economic situation in Burundi warrants the immediate attention of the international community and development partners to provide food security, health care, education and energy. There have been noteworthy results in containing the spread of malaria, with the support of UNICEF, and in training community health workers. That positive dynamic should continue.

The low level of humanitarian aid is still very worrying. With more than 3 million people in need of assistance across the country, it will be important to ensure that the international community supports the humanitarian response plan for Burundi for 2018. The United Nations Refugee Agency appeal for funding to

support Burundian refugees in 2018 continues to be the lowest-funded refugee response plan in the world. We commend Burundi's neighbours for hosting large numbers of its refugees, and would like to remind States that their repatriation must be voluntary and conducted in accordance with the principles of respect and dignity outlined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Sustainable security and stability in Burundi should be the main considerations, and international support to that process is vital. We commend the active engagement of the team from the Office of the Special Envoy in assisting the facilitator of the fourth dialogue session, encouraging the participants to engage in an inclusive dialogue. The expedited finalization of the status-of-mission agreement will promote the commitment of the United Nations and enhance cooperation with Burundi.

In conclusion, we reiterate the importance of a regional approach in addressing the underlying causes of Burundi's issues, linking security and development, and we also call for a more coordinated conduct of operations on the ground by the United Nations in this part of Africa. Full implementation of the Arusha Agreement is vital to preventing a further escalation of violence and maintaining peace and security in Burundi.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for the quality of his briefing on the situation in Burundi, and we commend his very hard work in that country. We would also like to thank Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his briefing on the evolving sociopolitical situation in Burundi.

Côte d'Ivoire has taken note of the efforts that the Burundian authorities and the international community have made to stabilize the country in the past few years. However, we are still concerned about the state of progress in the political process, human rights issues and the humanitarian situation. With regard to the political process, we are concerned about the impasse in the political dialogue, despite the international community's mediation efforts. We regret the fact that the Inter-Burundian Dialogue conducted under the auspices of the East African Community, whose fourth session was held in Uganda between 27 November and 8 December 2017, has made no significant progress at a time when important deadlines such as the draft review of the Constitution, scheduled for May of this year, and the 2020 presidential election, are approaching.

However, we hope that the changes envisaged in the area of constitutional reform will not undermine the achievements of the historic Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, which has enabled the country to enjoy 10 years of peace and stability and which, regardless of differences of interpretation, remains central to reconciliation between Burundi's political stakeholders. In that regard, we urge the parties in Burundi to begin an inclusive political dialogue and encourage the Government to work to establish a peaceful sociopolitical atmosphere that will enable all stakeholders to participate in the country's peace and reconciliation process, on the basis of the Arusha Agreement.

Côte d'Ivoire is concerned about the persistent allegations of human rights violations in Burundi. We urge the Burundian authorities to make every effort to investigate them and, if they are confirmed, to take all steps necessary to put an end to them and to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice. We are also concerned about the massive displacement of people that has been adding to the number of Burundian refugees in neighbouring countries. We encourage the Government of Burundi and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to resume negotiations with a view to signing a memorandum of understanding on the legal framework for their cooperation and its practical aspects. We urge the Burundian authorities to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Human Rights Council-mandated Commission of Inquiry on Burundi in order to shed light on the allegations of extrajudicial executions, arrests and arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment.

We remain concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Burundi. The fact is that despite the possibility of voluntary returns, the number of Burundian refugees living in neighbouring countries is still significant, and the country's socioeconomic situation does not seem conducive to their rapid return and sustainable reintegration into Burundi's social fabric. This is an opportunity, however, to welcome the signing on 30 August 2017 of the tripartite agreement between the Government of Burundi, the Government of Tanzania and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which has enabled nearly 13,000 Burundian refugees to return. In that

regard, we encourage the Burundian authorities to create conditions conducive to these refugees' return and urge the United Nations and the country's bilateral and humanitarian partners to provide support and assistance. My delegation welcomes the launch by the United Nations of a 2018 emergency plan for Burundi, aimed at providing protection and lifesaving assistance to those in need throughout the country.

In conclusion, we appeal to the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular, to further support the efforts of the East African Community and the mediator and facilitator of the Inter-Burundian Dialogue to restore stability and national reconciliation in Burundi. Lastly, we urge the Council to maintain its unity on the subject and give sustained attention to the situation in Burundi.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and the Permanent Representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Jürg Lauber, in his capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

Bolivia values and supports the Special Envoy's efforts to continue the Inter-Burundian Dialogue in an inclusive environment. In that regard, we see positive developments in his work during his visits to Burundi and Tanzania with national stakeholders, including the Government authorities in Bujumbura, and his consultations with the facilitator of the Dialogue appointed by the East African Community. We encourage all the parties to support the facilitation efforts led by Tanzania's former President, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, in accordance with the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, which should continue to be the cornerstone of this process. We also call on the parties to implement the road map proposed by Mr. Mkapa in order to reach consensus and create appropriate conditions for a peaceful environment during the upcoming elections, which will take place in 2020. In that regard, we appreciate the efforts made during the fourth dialogue meeting, held in Arusha from 27 November to 8 December last year, which resulted in a summary of 19 points of convergence.

We highlight that progress and we call on the parties to continue with the inclusive dialogue and work on the points of divergence in order to reach a negotiated political agreement and to promote national reconciliation. Similarly, we praise the work the Office of the Special Envoy carried out during the meeting in providing technical assistance to the facilitator.

We acknowledge the work of the EAC, the Special Envoy of the African Union, the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations country team. We encourage them to continue their work and to coordinate their efforts in order to achieve better cooperation and continue to support the EAC-led mediation.

We also welcome the joint statement of the nineteenth summit of the Heads of State of the Community of East African States, issued on 23 February, which expressed gratitude for the work of the facilitator and the mediator of the inter-Burundian dialogue. We also commend the EAC for its commitment through this statement to finance, within its possibilities, the dialogue process. We agree that the EAC should continue to lead this process.

We note the efforts of the Government of Burundi to restore peace following the 2015 crisis and we highlight the fact that the security situation remains stable. We encourage it to continue to build a peaceful environment that contributes to the development of Burund and we commend its decision to host the twentieth summit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern African in April, which also testifies to the calm currently being enjoyed in the country.

We welcome the voluntary return of refugees. We call on host countries to continue facilitating their return in cooperation with the Government and the High Commissioner for Refugees and to continue supporting the return programme, since it is hoped that 60,000 refugees will return over the course of this year. We believe that conditions ensuring a voluntary, informed, dignified, safe and permanent return to their places of origin must be guaranteed. To that end, we call on host countries to relocate refugees far from the borders in cases in which they do not want to return, in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

We encourage the international community to continue financing the humanitarian response programme in Burundi and we call on the countries that imposed sanctions to consider lifting them, since unilateral sanctions run counter to the Charter of the United Nations, constitute a violation of international

law and have been shown to have negative consequences on the lives of vulnerable groups, such as women and children, as well as a negative impact on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In conclusion, we believe that the full and committed involvement of the international community and of all the parties is of utmost importance. In this vein, it is essential to continue strengthening the bases to cooperate on the permanent stabilization of Burundi in the framework of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and with strict respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Burundi with a process led by and for Burundians.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We wish to express our thanks to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, former President Kafando, for his briefing on the current political situation in Burundi. We also thank Ambassador Lauber, Chairman of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for his briefing. We applaud the excellent work he has been doing and we endorse the agenda he has set as he moves forward with a view to discharging his responsibilities.

We take note of the improvements in the overall security situation in Burundi, which, as the Special Envoy says, have been remarkable. However, we recognize the need to sustain the existing level of stability and transform it into durable peace. That is indeed important and a consensus needs to be created among the Burundians around this noble objective.

The need for broad consensus, as the Special Envoy says, is very critical. This can be peacefully resolved only through an inclusive dialogue on the basis of the Arusha Agreement and the Constitution of Burundi. It is imperative to ensure that the ongoing efforts at constitutional reform are conducted through a broad consensus of all stakeholders so as to preserve the country's security and stability. We are convinced that the Special Envoy has the necessary goodwill and commitment to helping Burundi achieve this. We have full confidence in him.

We reiterate our support to the eastern African-led inter-Burundian dialogue and the efforts of the facilitator, former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, under the leadership of the mediator of the Community of East African States (EAC), President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda.

As witnessed in the inter-Burundian talks held in Arusha on 27 November to 8 December 2017, the peace process remains deadlocked in spite of the efforts by the facilitator. No doubt it would have been good to hear directly from him on the challenges encountered and the way forward, but we understand he could not make it. In any case, the need to reinvigorate the peace process is clear and we take note of the decision by the East African Community summit, which was held this past weekend in Uganda, calling upon all the Burundian parties to expeditiously conclude the dialogue under the facilitator and mediator. The annual summit also expressed its readiness to deploy the high-level committee of Heads of State on Burundi.

The support of the Council to the EAC-led peace process remains very important to create the necessary conditions for peaceful and democratic elections in 2020. We believe that, as the Special Envoy has stressed, that coordination and coherence between the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations are also key to making progress in the peace process.

We appreciate the important discussions held by the Secretary-General and his Envoy with regional and subregional partners in this spirit. We note that Burundi is facing enormous socioeconomic challenges, and that, coupled with reduced international financial assistance, has made the situation more difficult. While the voluntary return of Burundian refugees from Tanzania is welcome, its impact in further compounding the socioeconomic challenges of the country cannot be overlooked. That is why Burundi needs international support to provide assistance to the returning Burundian refugees and to implement its socioeconomic development programmes. In this context, we commend the Chairman of the Burundi configuration of the PBC for his various engagements focused on the socioeconomic cooperation between the international partners in the Government of Burundi. We believe that these efforts have to be seen as an integral part of the search for peace in Burundi to support its strong institutions in creating a conducive climate in which political differences can be addressed without backsliding into the violence of the past.

It should be stressed that though it might seem counterintuitive, Burundi indeed has strong institutions, which we in the Horn of Africa are very much aware of. How could Burundi otherwise be able to contribute to the fight against Al-Shabaab in Somalia? We deeply

appreciate what Burundi is doing in that regard, but we look forward to those institutions being strengthened and made operational by promoting further inclusivity, which is so critical.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank the Special Envoy of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Burundi, Mr. Michel Kafando, for his important work. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, Ambassador Jürg Lauber, in his capacity as Chairman of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

We share the concerns expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the situation in Burundi (S/2018/89), in particular on the need to reactivate the inter-Burundian dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community and other regional organizations. Similarly, in the light of reports of the deterioration of the human rights situation, we encourage the Government to strive for real progress in its relations with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Finally, we share the opinion that the proposed revision of the Constitution is a matter that falls within Burundi's domestic sovereignty, but at the same time we believe that the initiative should be conducted through an inclusive process that ensures the broad participation of the population. Furthermore, taking into the content and spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, which put an end to a tragic period of violence that must never recur, we support the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, other United Nations agencies and friendly countries in the framework of preventive diplomacy, in full respect for Burundi's sovereignty.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Shingiro (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that my delegation has taken the floor under your presidency, Sir, I wish first of all to offer you my warm congratulations on your deserved assuption of the presidency of the Council for the month of February, which you have exercised with brio. We bore witness this past weekend to your efforts with respect to a State Member of the United Nations.

Let me also thank the Security Council as a whole for its constructive contribution to the Burundi peace process, and especially for its commitment to the national sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of my country, Burundi.

I welcome the presence among us of Mr. Michel Kafando, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi. I take note of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi (S/2018/89), which Mr. Kafando introduced, although my delegation does not agree with all its contents, to which I will revert later in my statement.

My thanks also go to my colleague Mr. Jürg Lauber, President of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his contribution to the peacebuilding process in Burundi. We again pledge him our long-standing cooperation.

The purpose of my statement is to share with the Council the new developments in Burundi since its previous meeting on this item in November last year (see S/PV.8109).

At the political level, Burundi is already preparing for the constitutional referendum of 2018 and the general elections of 2020. The priority of the Government in all this is to bring these two major electoral events to fruition by creating a priori an environment conducive to the organization of democratic, free, transparent and, above all, peaceful elections. The registration operation for both elections was conducted in excellent conditions from 8 to 17 February throughout the country and in the diaspora. Provisional figures show that, in total, more than 5 million Burundians registered on the electoral roll, with a slightly larger number of women than men, which we welcome. This morning, the Independent National Electoral Commission organized a guided tour open to all — political parties, civil society, partners and Government — through the data-processing centre for the establishment of the electoral roll. All of this highlights the transparency of the process.

The inter-Burundi dialogue, led with the facilitation of the East African Community, is proceeding normally. At the fourth session held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 27 November to 8 December 2017, participants were able to make progress because there were more points of convergence than of divergence. That is what we call progress. Contrary to what is said in paragraphs 9 and 14 of the Secretary-General's report, as well as in the section on observations and comments, the dialogue is not at a standstill.

While the Secretary-General's report speaks of a dialogue process that has died, the final communiqué of the Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community, held in Kampala on Friday, 23 February, expressed appreciation for the excellent work already done by the mediation and facilitation of the inter-Burundian dialogue, led respectively by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda and former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin William Mkapa. This deep gap between the appreciation of the region, which is close to Burundi geographically, politically and culturally, and the pessimistic position expressed in the report and by certain actors outside the framework of the inter-Burundian dialogue, constitutes an anomaly that should draw the Council's attention.

The nineteenth Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community also reaffirmed the continued regional ownership of the inter-Burundi dialogue process by the East African Community and reiterated the commitment to financing and rapidly concluding the process under the exclusive leadership of the region.

As regards the revision of the Constitution, it should be recalled that the ongoing constitutional reform is the result of extensive consultations conducted over more than a year with the Burundian population in all its diversity. It is an exercise that is undertaken exclusively in the framework of Burundi's national sovereignty and that aims — contrarily to the concerns expressed by some — at ensuring the long-term stability of the country by the end of the transitional period under the present Constitution.

It is clear that the United Nations and its Member States are in no way empowered to discuss the constitutional affairs of sovereign States. In assuming the right to comment on the draft constitutional referendum in Burundi, in paragraph 35 of the report, the Organization is flagrantly violating the principle of respect for the sovereign equality of States enshrined in in Article 2.7 of the Charter of the United Nations, which states

> "Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter".

The reference in the report to the review of the Constitution in Burundi in paragraphs 4 and 8 is a bold step that interferes in Burundi's domestic affairs. The Council should take note, since it is at variance with the Charter of the United Nations and is critical of the sovereign right of the Burundian people to amend their Constitution, but, in the past, the United Nations has not voiced its concerns in similar cases of constitutional amendments in the region or elsewhere in the world. The same report breaches Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations, which stipulates that

> "The Organization and its Members, in pursuit of the Purposes stated in Article 1, shall act in accordance with ... the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members".

Such double standards in addressing the various situations within Member States must be discouraged so as not to set a dangerous precedent. In addition, in accordance with article 297 of the current Constitution of Burundi, the initiative to amend the Constitution lies with the President of the Republic, following consultations with the Government, the National Assembly and the Senate and on an absolute majority vote of their members. Article 298 of the Constitution states that "[t]he President of the Republic can submit to referendum a bill of amendment of the Constitution". In the light of those articles, it is clear that any request or comment that is above and beyond those two provisions violates the Constitution.

Contrary to paragraph 4 of the report, the new draft Constitution guarantees peace and stability, protection for the opposition, the protection of human rights and minorities, the protection of our national sovereignty, as well as ethnic and gender quotas, as stipulated in the 2000 Arusha Accords. All substantive articles of the Arusha Accords have been retained in the draft amendment. The security situation is generally good throughout the entire territory, with the exception of some isolated instances of crime, not exclusive to Burundi, as underscored by the Special Envoy and other speakers. This is the real situation on the ground in Burundi.

The country has taken an irreversible step forward on the path to peace, stability and national reconciliation. It must also be underscored that the mass return of refugees to the country and the fact that the Government of Burundi will be organizing and hosting the twentieth summit of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, following several

field assessment missions, demonstrates that normalcy has returned to our country.

In addition to those positive developments, a large delegation of elected members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) visited Burundi. According to them,

> "We have seen and can confirm that the country is peaceful and calm. We call upon all elected members of the EALA to spread the word about Burundi's peaceful security environment. We also call upon investors, not only within the East African community, but also throughout the entire world, to invest in Burundi in an effort to boost its economy".

That statement was made by the elected members of the region with regard to the security situation in Burundi.

In addition, my delegation rejects paragraphs 20 and 41 of the report, which seek to single out the youth wing of the ruling party — Imbonerakure — as being responsible for instances of insecurity, instead of directly calling for restraint among all young people affiliated to political parties — ruling and opposition parties alike because security in Burundi, like elsewhere, affects us all.

The paragraphs are similar to other parts of the report that underscore its bias. I stress that there was no mention of young people in opposition parties, some of whom fled the country after killing and raping several innocent people, destroying public goods and preventing children from attending school during the 2015 elections. That part of the report, which singles out some young people in Burundi and not others, breaches the principle of neutrality recognized by the Charter of the United Nations.

With regard to human rights, I thank my colleague from Côte d'Ivoire, who drew my Government's attention to the human rights situation, of which we took note. Paragraphs 24 to 28 of the report addresses the human rights situation in the country. It must be underscored that despite the challenges we face, which are not exclusive to Burundi, the country has made significant progress at standard-setting and institutional levels.

With regard to standard-setting, various legal texts have been adopted, such as rules governing public meetings and demonstrations, the establishment of a special court for land tenure and other goods, the suppression of human trafficking and protection for victims of trafficking in persons, protection for victims, witnesses and other people in at-risk situations, preventing and reducing the incidences of gender-based violence, protecting the victims of gender-based violence, the press and non-profit organizations.

At the institutional level, Burundi remains very committed to protecting human rights through several national mechanisms, including the National Independent Human Rights Commission, which enjoys a status compliant with the Paris principles; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; the National Observatory for the Prevention and Eradication of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity; the National Council for Unity and Reconciliation, the legal arsenal that abolished the death penalty in Burundi, as well as the myriad international conventions that have been ratified by the State of Burundi, including the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. In addition, Burundi has submitted its report to the Universal Periodic Review, summarizing progress made and the challenges pending in the area of human rights. Burundi was on the agenda at the twenty-ninth session of the Universal Periodic Review on 18 January. During that meeting, Burundi welcomed constructive recommendations from Member States and regretted the fact that some were politicized, selective and demonstrated double standards.

With regard to national reconciliation, during his message to the nation on 31 December 2017, the President of the Republic pardoned approximately 2,000 prisoners, many of whom have been released. Others are about to join their families. Gestures of peace have also been made following the coup d'état during the 2015 elections. Two private radio stations that were destroyed within a few hours following the attempted coup d'état on 13 May 2015 have been re-opened. Fifteen arrest warrants issued against leaders of political parties and of civil society have been cancelled. More than 2,000 prisoners have been released. Such gestures should be supported and rewarded by the Council.

With regard to the return of refugees who fled the country in 2015, highlighted in paragraph 23 of the report, the Government of Burundi and subregional organizations continue to request that refugees return home to assist with the reconstruction of Burundi. It is thanks to the return to normalcy in the country, the pace of the voluntary repatriation of refugees has been satisfactory with the return of thousands of citizens

who sought refuge in Tanzania and the wider region. From 2016 to today, more than 200,000 Burundians have returned to the country on a voluntary basis, including 13,000 between August and December 2017, as my colleague Mr. Lauber noted. In 2018, Burundi expects more than 60,000 returnees from the region.

In the humanitarian field, my delegation appreciates any initiative of the international community to assist those in need, especially those in emergency situations, be it through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) or any other humanitarian organization. My delegation wishes to note, however, OCHA's lack of cooperation with the sectoral ministries concerned with humanitarian issues and the inflation of numbers in its preparation of its 2018 humanitarian response plan for Burundi. As a result of this lack of cooperation, the Government of Burundi, through its communiqué of 21 February, requested OCHA officials to work closely with the Burundian side to draw up a consensual report in keeping with the realities of the situation. The Government is willing to cooperate fully with OCHA in this regard.

With regard to cooperation with the United Nations, as many speakers have noted and as referred to in paragraphs 28, 42 and 43 of the report, Burundi maintains its desire to strengthen and sustain its relations with the United Nations and its branches on the ground. The draft agreement with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is under discussion between the two parties. In mid-January, Burundi asked the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva to propose to the Burundian side new dates for the resumption of discussions. Bujumbura awaits Geneva's response in this regard. For its part, the Government of Burundi reiterates its willingness to cooperate fully with the United Nations and other partners in a spirit of mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation and in accordance with the rules of the game enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

In conclusion, allow me to ask the Council to consider, to the extent possible, removing Burundi from its agenda since the situation in the country is generally calm and presents no threat to peace and international security, which is the main mission of the Council. I recall that there is no objective criterion that justifies maintaining on the Council's agenda the item on the situation in Burundi, a country that — as my colleague from Ethiopia noted — has more than 6,000 peacekeepers in United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.